

Gibraltar row



Falklands tribute Veterans at the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffs, mark the 35th anniversary of the Argentine invasion of the Falklands and remember the 255 British personnel and three civilians killed during the war. A service was conducted by the Rev David Cooper, who served in the war with the Paras.

Potent force Reduced Navy ‘could still cripple Spain’

Britain’s Navy is far weaker than it was during the Falklands War but could still “cripple” Spain, military experts have said.

Rear-Adml Chris Parry, a former director of operational capability at the Ministry of Defence, has called on the Government to invest “appropriately” in Britain’s military capacity if it wants to “talk big” over Gibraltar.

As the Government moved to retake the Falkland Islands from Argentina in 1982, the Royal Navy had no fewer than 127 ships, including 60 destroyers and frigates – as well as two aircraft carriers.

The Navy today has no aircraft carriers and just 13 frigates and six destroyers in service, down from a fleet of 33 in 2000.

The UK spent around 4 per cent of GDP on the military in the Eighties

under Margaret Thatcher, while it sits at just 2 per cent under Theresa May.

Rear-Adml Parry said: “If the Government wants to talk big over Gibraltar, or indeed anywhere else, they have to invest appropriately in the military capacity to back that up.

“We are a lot less powerful than we were during the Falklands and we are much weaker.

“We are weaker in our war-fighting assets in particular because of the disingenuous way in which this Government has resourced defence – it’s been totally disgraceful.

However, he said Britain’s capability was three times more powerful than Spain’s.

“We could cripple Spain in the medium term and I think the Americans would probably support us too,” he said.

Fallon: Britain will fight for Gibraltar’s rights

Defence Secretary vows to protect the territory’s sovereignty against ‘Brexit bid’ by the Spanish

By Steven Swinford
DEPUTY POLITICAL EDITOR

BRITAIN is ready to go to war to defend the sovereignty of Gibraltar, the Defence Secretary has suggested, as he vowed to go “all the way” to protect the territory.

Sir Michael Fallon said that Britain was going to “look after” Gibraltar, adding that the people of the peninsula

had made it “very clear” that they did not want to live under Spanish rule.

It came as Lord Howard, the former Conservative leader, said that Theresa May would show the “same resolve” over Gibraltar as Margaret Thatcher did over the Falklands.

The Prime Minister yesterday told Fabian Picardo, chief minister of Gibraltar, that Britain would never allow Spain to take over the Rock against the will of its people.

A Downing Street spokesman said: “The Prime Minister said we will never enter into arrangements under which the people of Gibraltar would pass under the sovereignty of another state against their freely and democratically

expressed wishes, nor will we ever enter into a process of sovereignty negotiations with which Gibraltar is not content.”

The row erupted after the European Union put the future of Gibraltar at stake in Brexit negotiations by effectively backing Spain in its long-running dispute with the UK over the British Overseas Territory.

The EU’s draft Brexit negotiating guidelines appear to hand Spain an effective veto over whether an eventual deal will apply to Gibraltar.

The move prompted fury in the UK, where ministers described the move as “utterly unacceptable”. Mr Picardo accused Spain of trying to “manipulate”

Rocky relations Tensions between Britain and Spain

2002 Gibraltar votes against plans for shared sovereignty.
2004 300th anniversary of British capture of the Rock.
2006 Spain allows passenger flights for first time in decades.
2012 Queen Sofia cancels London trip amid fishing rights row.
2013 Spain tightens border after artificial reef is built.
2014 Foreign Office reports 500 incursions by Spanish boats during 2013.
2016 Tories warn Spanish actions are security risk.

Brexit negotiations in a bid to make a claim on the Rock.

Sir Michael told BBC One’s *Andrew Marr Show*: “Gibraltar is going to be protected all the way because the sovereignty of Gibraltar cannot be changed without the agreement of the people of Gibraltar and they have made it very clear they do not want to live under Spanish rule.

“It is interesting in the draft guidelines from the EU that Spain is not saying that the whole thing is subject to the transfer of sovereignty.”

Lord Howard drew comparisons with the invasion of the Falkland Islands by Argentina, highlighting yesterday’s 35th anniversary of the

start of he war. He told Sophy Ridge on Sky News: “There is no question whatever that our Government will stand by Gibraltar.

“Thirty five years ago this week another woman prime minister sent a task force half way across the world to defend the freedom of another small group of British people against another Spanish-speaking country. I am absolutely certain our current Prime Minister will show the same resolve.”

Mr Picardo said that life under Spanish rule would be “absolutely awful”.

“I am sure the UK will be battling for Gibraltar,” he said. “Gibraltar is not on the table as a chip.”

PM flies to Middle East on quest to bolster links outside Europe

By Gordon Rayner
POLITICAL EDITOR

THERESA MAY will today embark on a highly symbolic trade and security mission to the Middle East as part of her plan for a “bold, confident future” for post-Brexit Britain.

Just five days after invoking Article 50 to begin the UK’s withdrawal from the EU, the Prime Minister will send a clear message to Europe – and to the British public – that ministers are “seizing the opportunities ahead” for trade with the rest of the world.

Europe’s most powerful leaders have made it clear to Mrs May that a trade deal will not be discussed until the terms of the so-called “divorce bill” for leaving the EU are agreed.

Hardliners have even said there will be no trade talks until Britain quits the EU in 2019.

Mrs May has responded by dispatching ministers all over the globe. Philip Hammond, the Chancellor, will visit India with Mark Carney, the Bank of

England governor, while Liam Fox, the International Trade Secretary, will tour other Asian countries.

Mrs May will fly to Jordan today before spending two days in Saudi Arabia.

Downing Street said the Prime Min-

£6.6bn

The value of goods and services exported by Britain to Saudi Arabia, our largest Middle East trading partner, in 2015

ister would “explore ways of boosting our already strong” trade links with the two countries.

Saudi Arabia is the UK’s biggest trading partner in the Middle East, with £6.6billion of goods and services exported in 2015.

Mrs May said yesterday: “There is so much we can do together on trade,

with immense potential for Saudi investment to provide a boost to the British economy.”

Both Saudi Arabia and Jordan have defence contracts with British companies, and Mrs May is expected to agree new support for the Royal Jordanian Air Force.

Ahead of the visit, Mrs May linked security and trade repeatedly. She said: “We must look at the challenges that we, and future generations, will face and build stronger partnerships with countries that will be vital to both our security and our prosperity.”

She said it was “clearly in the UK’s security and prosperity interests to support Jordan and Saudi Arabia” in creating stability in the region.

No10 said the Prime Minister would say that “the tragic attack in Westminster showed only too starkly that terrorism is an evil facing us all”.

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£50bn bill to leave the EU? They owe us money, says IDS

By Steven Swinford

BRITAIN will seek to get its money back from the European Union – instead of paying to leave – under plans being considered by Cabinet ministers.

European leaders have warned the UK it faces a divorce bill of up to £50billion for commitments and pension liabilities. However, *The Daily Telegraph* understands that officials are drawing up a register of the UK’s assets in the EU as part of negotiations.

It comes after an influential House of Lords committee concluded that the Government was not legally obliged to pay Brussels anything. Officials believe that the UK is entitled of £9billion-worth of funds currently held by the European Investment Bank. Separate analysis suggests the UK is entitled to a further £14billion in EU property, cash and other investments.

Iain Duncan Smith, the Tory MP, said: “We own a chunk of the EU; we don’t owe them any money. They are petrified that in two years’ time we will pull out and they will lose the second highest donor to the Budget.”

Boris Johnson, the Foreign Secretary, last month invoked Margaret Thatch-



Theresa May and husband Philip attend church yesterday in Reading, Berkshire

er’s success in securing the rebate when asked about the prospect of a divorce bill. He said: “I think you can recall the 1984 Fontainebleau summit in which Mrs Thatcher said she wanted her money back and I think that is exactly what we will get.”

It comes after the EU made a significant climbdown in the wake of Theresa May triggering Article 50.

European leaders conceded that the EU and the UK did not have to reach an agreement on the divorce bill before Brexit talks begin.

Blue passports could be set for a post-Brexit return

By Laura Hughes
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

THE traditional blue British passport could return under a £500million project to produce a new version of the document after Brexit.

The Government has put the contract out to tender for the “design, production and personalisation of the UK passport” after 2019.

There have been growing calls for the old-style documents to be reintroduced.

The British passport has had a dark blue cover since 1920, but it was replaced by the EU’s burgundy-coloured format in 1988. Discussions have reportedly already taken place with potential bidders for the contract. The current deal expires in 2019, the year the UK is set to leave the EU.

Andrew Rosindell, the Tory MP and chairman of the Flags and Heraldry Committee, said: “It’s a matter of identity. Having the pink European passports has been a source of humiliation.”

A Home Office spokesman said: “The timing of any potential changes to the passport after the UK has left the EU has not been set.”

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